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ABSTRACT

Until the depression of the 1930s, camping was valued simply for its recreational and health benefits. Then, with the advent of the philosophy of progressivism and the consequent changes in educational goals and practices, the educational potentials of camping also began to be examined. Attempts to redefine the role of camping and to seek recognition from the progressive elements in education were made. In this paper, taken from a copyrighted thesis, "Developing a Rationale for Outdoor Education," early studies on camping as education are reviewed. These studies were conducted during and following the period of depression, unemployment, and business failure in the 1930s. The studies examined camping in terms of its sociological orientation and its transition from a recreational activity only to an educational activity as well. The concept of social welfare camping was also examined. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (NQ)

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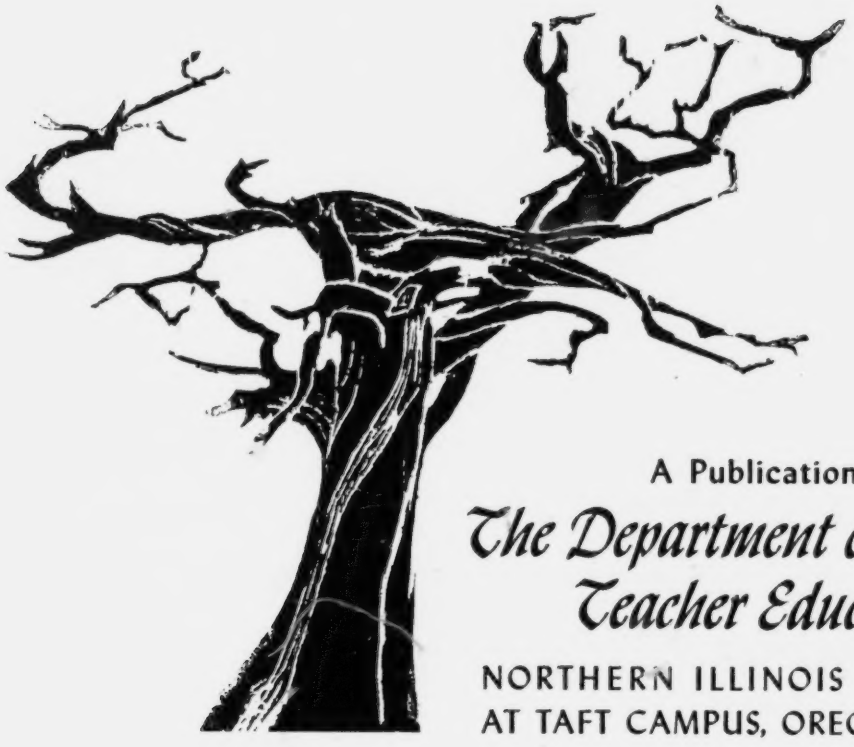

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TAFT CAMPUS OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. IX

BACKGROUNDS OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION:

A REVIEW OF EARLY STUDIES IN CAMPING AS EDUCATION

Morris Wiener

From Chapter II of copyrighted thesis, "Developing a Rationale for Outdoor Education," Michigan State University, 1965, by the author.

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Historically, as outdoor education programs were initiated and expanded, the ideas and concepts supporting and defining an outdoor education movement developed from several sources or points of view. The movement, as it is known today, was at first not easily recognizable as "outdoor education" per se, but resulted from the work of people in such fields as camping, education, recreation, physical education, social welfare, natural science and conservation.

Within the social and cultural setting of America in the late nineteen twenties and the nineteen thirties, the inception and development of a school camping movement took place. This was the primary form that outdoor education took at that time and was largely due to a recognition of the educational implications of summer camping programs. Thus, in the literature, some of the early studies from which a present basis for outdoor education evolved were concerned with the values of the summer camping experience. These early studies reflected an effort being made toward experimentation with camping in public education.

The studies reviewed were undertaken prior to and following the depression of the nineteen thirties when there was an upsurge of concern for society and an urgent desire to make education the means to a better life for all. Up until this period camping had been valued mainly for its recreational and health benefits. Now the philosophy of progressivism was changing educational goals and practices, and some camping leaders were examining the educational potentials of their own endeavors that were in keeping with the "new times." Attempts were being made to re-define the role of camping and to seek recognition from the progressive elements in education. Many persons during that time were serving in dual roles as educators and professional summer-camp leaders. The relationship being made between the school's emerging objectives and those of the camp seemed to be a natural development of mutual effort toward similar overall purposes.

One of the earliest studies to recognize the educational values in camping was that of Elwell at Harvard in 1925.[1] Elwell attempted to show the differences between the summer camp that was primarily for amusement and the "School of the Open" that was the organized camp in which the aim was distinctly educational.[2] He examined a number of factors in society including the school program and then built a philosophical case for the "School of the Open" based on a camping program that fulfilled the objectives of the new social philosophy. His emphasis was on simple natural

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1 Alcott F. Elwell, "The Summer Camp: A New Factor in Education," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1925).

2 Ibid., p.iv.

settings, actual experience, and cooperative group effort.

Arnold sought to determine the educational possibilities of the summer camp through a study of the choice and administration of the activities included in programs of private boys camps.[3] From replies of camp directors to a questionnaire on camping objectives he formulated aims that were in harmony with a set of objectives for secondary education. He grouped these objectives into four major divisions: moral, physical, mental, and social. Arnold foresaw that the values inherent in the summer camp movement would be taken up by social, religious, and philanthropic organizations as well as by the public schools.[4] He reported that "the public schools have begun to take an interest in educational possibilities of the summer camp and have established a few experimental camps."[5]

Dimock and Hendry's book, Camping and Character,[6] was one of the early studies that attempted to give experimental evidence of social and moral values in camping. Recognizing the demand for reorganizing camping as an educational agency, they responded to the newer currents in educational theory by seeking to evaluate the changes that occur in boys' character traits during a period of summer camping. They used paper and pencil tests, behavior observation records, and a behavior frequency rating scale in appraising changes in attitudes and behavior. The results gave some indication of the ability of one particular camping program to develop certain attitudes and appreciations and, at the same time, contributed to the development of more adequate evaluative instruments. They, too, predicted that the schools would begin to recognize the values of camping.

> The next decade will doubtless see schools extending their program through the summer to include the camping experience. Educators will increasingly become aware of the place of the camp in a complete year-long scheme of education.[7]

Included in this investigation were views on educational opportunities in camping and objectives of the summer camp. William H. Kilpatrick, in the foreword, outlined potential contributions of camping within the framework of a broader concept of education that he was helping to popularize. This seemed to reflect a mood of educational experimentalism in which Dimock and Hendry's work was undertaken.

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[3] J. Shailer Arnold, "The Educational Possibilities of the Summer Camp Program," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, 1928).

[4] Ibid., p. 2

[5] Ibid.

[6] Hedley S. Dimock and Charles E. Hendry, Camping and Character (New York: Association Press, 1929)

[7] Ibid., p. 335

Mason[8] used the concept of elemental wishes proposed by William I. Thomas[9] and Kilpatrick's approach to method[10] as a frame of reference for examining the summer camp experience. Through a structured interview technique, he secured the reactions and opinions of campers to the social and moral values of camping, camp leadership, the organization of the program, and the importance and popularity of various activities.[11]

Mason visualized the camp as a society within itself as well as a fragment of a greater society.[12] The camp could be "characterized by the same fundamental phenomena which describes any society - subjected to the same laws, motivated by the same social forces, and controlled by the same social methods. [13] He described the basic characteristic of youth as activity, or the desire for new experience, and pointed out the relationship of this striving for activity to children's interests. He further showed how this relationship could be capitalized on in the camp program. The conclusion he reached was that "any adequate approach to camping problems must rest upon an understanding of camper interests.[14]

Mason a sociologist, won the Redbook Magazines's Camp Literature Prize Award for constructive and creative contribution to the theory and practice of organized camping, and his work was published the following year as Camping and Education. This study represented one of the earliest attempts to apply a sociological point of view to a research project on camping. Mason opposed the interpretation of camping as either recreation or education, and maintained that they were one and the same. He said that:

> ...the modern educational approach, centering around the element of interest in subject matter, comes very close to being a play approach. The 'educational camp' building its 'curriculum' upon interests becomes a 'recreational camp.' The distinction, it seems to me, is an unnecessary and poorly drawn one.[15]

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[8]Bernard S. Mason, "Camping and Education," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1929).

[9]Thomas' four elemental wishes of mankind, as reported by Mason, were: new experience, security, recognition, and response.

[10]See W. H. Kilpatrick, Foundations of Method (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925).

[11]Bernard S. Mason, Camping and Education (New York: The McCall Co., 1930).

[12]Ibid., p. 236.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 8.

L.P. Sharp's dissertation,[16] undertaken at a time when he was involved in the transformation of a welfare camp from a fresh-air farm to an education enterprise, helped to lay out some of the broad aims and principles of educational camping. Sharp, like others, saw a relationship between the goals of education as outlined by Dewey and Kilpatrick and the possibilities inherent in the camp environment. Of the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education[17] he said, "These apply to the camping program as well as to education in general, and have aided in interpreting the aims and values of camping."[18] He sought to apply the "new educational philosophy" in analyzing a program of welfare agency camping and in making application and recommendations to that program during a four year experimental period. Sharp's concern at this point in his career was not for public education, but like many camping leaders of the time, he was trying to relate broad educational values to that program with which he was most immediately involved.[19] Although in this early work Sharp made no reference to public school camping, he did acknowledge that "camping is a series of purposeful, related experiences in real life situations, and is therefore an educational process."[20] He further stated that "the aims of education can act as a guide and an aid to the wider and fuller interpretation of camping."[21]

Creative Camping,[22] published as a text in 1931, was in a sense a study of camping, and was one of many writings that emerged from a group work orientation. Lieberman stated that "the book was planned only as a description of our camp experience and not as a theoretical work."[23] But the description and the framework in which it was written helped to interpret more clearly the application of social idealism to the camping movement. Hence, it is included in this review.

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[16] Lloyd B. Sharp, "Education and the Summer Camp, An Experiment," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1930).

[17] The Cardinal Principles were part of a statement of objectives proposed by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association in 1918.

[18] Lloyd B. Sharp, Education and the Summer Camp, An Experiment in Contributions to Education Series, No. 390 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1930).

[19] Sharp applied his ideas of camping to public education later, and in 1947 an experiment in camping education was conducted at Life Camps which he directed.

[20] Sharp, op.cit., p. 36.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Joshua Lieberman, Creative Camping (New York: Association Press, 1931).

[23] Ibid., p. 232.

Lieberman was at the time of the study executive director of Pioneer Youth of America, a club and camping organization conducted by leaders in the progressive education and labor movements. William H. Kilpatrick was serving as educational advisor to Pioneer Youth and wrote the foreword to the text. In regard to the organization, he said:

> It has built itself consciously and critically upon the best education it could find. When, therefore, it took up camping, it had already a considerable experience based on democracy and education of the 'whole child'. The camp simply brought the all day opportunity for livingout of its already proved methods and principles.[24]

Lieberman directed the organization's National Experimental Camp from 1924 to 1929, and he listed the following as outstanding elements of the camp:

1. Co-education
2. Varied religious and national and racial groups
3. Democratically managed
4. Activities based on creative interests, not predetermined
5. Respect for the individual
6. Real responsibility
7. Opportunities for achievement and growth of a sense of personal worth.[25]

A few years following the publication of Creative Camping, Blumenthal's book, Group Work in Camping,[26] helped to crystalize the theoretical concepts and refine the application of principles that Lieberman illustrated. The aim of Blumenthal's work was to "examine the nature of groups in camp, how relationships in the groups modify camper behavior, and how this group work process may become a constructive educational force in the group setting."[27] It was written with the hope that emphasis on the group would point to social process as a significant part of the camp program. Basic philosophical concepts of group work were examined as well as means of application in group functioning, social control, leadership, and the relationship of the individual to the group.

McAuliffe, in 1934 used examples from his own private camp in examining the contributions of summer camp to education.[28] His study was written as a running commentary and consisted mainly of opinion based on personal

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[24] Ibid., foreword

[25] Ibid., p. 234

[26] Louis H. Blumenthal, Group Work in Camping (New York: The Association Press, 1937). This was first presented as a series of lectures.

[27] Ibid., p vii.

[28] F. Joseph McAuliffe, "The Summer Camp: A Contribution to Education," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Boston College, Boston, Mass., 1934).

experience and advice to other camp directors. He saw as the aims of summer camping character building, intellectual advancement, and physical development, with character training as the unique educational outcome of camping.[29]

In contrast to McAuliffe's thesis, the study by Ward[30] attempted to relate camping directly to the progressive education movement. Perhaps by 1935 there was enough ferment in camping, as well as in progressivism, to seek a stronger bond between the two movements. Ward presented a number of insights into the origin of summer camping and listed the following as contributing factors which prepared the way for camping:

1. Breaking away from conventional life by Thoreau and other lovers of the outdoors who popularized their experiences through writing.
2. Influences toward adventure and outdoor living that came from the Mexican and Civil Wars.
3. Rapid urbanization and industrialization which caused people to seek relief from cramped living and working conditions.
4. Increased wealth and improved transportation.
5. The school calendar which made no provisions for summer months.[31]

He traced the history of summer camping from its early beginnings and documented its growth from an outdoor vacation program to an educational program designed to fill the gap created by the school calendar's lack of provision for summer programs.

Ward recognized the beginnings of organized camping from 1880 to 1900 "as a part of the outdoor recreation movement. . . with no definite educational philosophy, just a vague purpose of a 'better life'."[32] He further postulated that summer camping had not sprung from any one source but from varied ideas, impulses and efforts[33] . . .that increasingly became recognized as an educational force."[34] He saw a danger in summer camping becoming academic, highly organized, and formalized as a result of the influences of testing and extrinsic awards in the nineteen twenties, but was assured that some camp directors sensed the importance of change and experimentation. He commented that they

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[29]Ibid., pp. 1-2.

[30]Carlos W. Ward, Organized Camping and Progressive Education, (Nashville, Tennessee: Cullum and Ghertner, 1935).

[31]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[32]Ibid., p. 7.

[33]Ibid., p. 20.

[34]Ibid., p. 38.

> ...came in contact with educators and psychologists who fired them with ideas of the possibilities of changed and less mechanized methods of dealing with boys and girls. They became critical minded and began to study, to experiment, and to evaluate their results. . . . Others caught this spirit of investigation and inquiry and began searching for ways of transforming the regimented academic camp curricula. A movement of free and unhampered progressive education may result.[35]

A documented case history of one such experimental camping program comprised a major portion of the book. The approach used in the YMCA camp described was based on cooperative living, camper interests, democratic government and control, and personality enrichment.

Ward recognized as a danger that the new educational direction in camping could become mere verbiage rather than actual practice.

> It is difficult to determine to what extent the trend toward a new philosophy of camping has become incorporated in actual practice. In times of transition there is a tendency for the phraseology and philosophy of a progressive movement to get acceptance and to run far ahead of the actual understanding and practice of the procedures.[36]

In regard to the Progressive Education Association and the Camp Directors Association of America he had this to say:

> Are not they destined to a realization that they have enough in common to make it worth while to form some bond of affiliation for the sharing of certain types of experiences? Both seem to be seeking similar goals for their patrons and to be finding common ground in educational methods, techniques and philosophies.[37]

He acknowledged the fact that "the majority of camp directors have had teaching experience, and many of them are employed as teachers in schools and colleges for the major part of the year.[38] As for the future that these individuals might have in educational camping, he raised the following questions:

> Will education take over camping and thus make the school calendar extend all year? Can public education become sufficiently progressive? Will camping be truly creative or will it become a trailer of educational philosophy?[39]

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[35] Ibid., p. 51.

[36] Ibid., p. 160.

[37] Ibid., p. 167..

[38] Ibid., p. 169.

[39] Ibid.

Summary

The early studies in camping as education that were produced during and following a period of depression, unemployment, and business failure were a small part of the awakening in society that looked forward to a brighter future for all. Those persons engaged in camping either full time or part time could not help but be aware of what was happening around them and respond in some way. A few camp leaders became swept up in the surging progressivism and responded to the newer social and educational philosophies in theses, dissertations, and texts, as well as in other writings. Although stemming from different backgrounds and interests, their ideas found expression in a common theme: summer camp and its new role in society.

The transition of camping objectives from recreational to educational seemed to occupy much of the effort of the writers of this period. Whether such a transition was similarly taking place in camping practices was difficult to discern, except for the few experimental programs reported. Also, a desire to gain recognition as well as direction from progressive education was a paramount interest of the times. Dimock and Hendry, whose work helped pave the way for others, warned that:

> If the summer camp is to be a significant factor in progessive education, it is essential that its purposes be carefully re-examined and its objectives formulated more definitely and specifically.[40]

This was the challenge that was being answered by Elwell, Arnold, McAuliffe, and Guggenheimer from a background of private camping experience. Mason's sociological orientation added another perspective of the nature of the camp society and was followed later by the group-work point of view of Lieberman and Blumenthal. A study by Osborne, closely related to these, was also completed during this period[41] and published in 1937 as Camping and Guidance.

Ward's text describing an agency camp's transition was noteworthy in its detailed description of the historical background of camping and the social and cultural setting in which it arose. Sharp's work in social welfare camping presented still another orientation. His study was particularly significant because of the importance attached to his continued role in outdoor education up to the time of this death in 1963.

The work carried on during this early period laid a foundation for studies in school camping that followed during the nineteen forties and fifites. Such studies from that period reflect the continual development of an outdoor education movment primarily focused on the public school.

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[40]Dimock and Hendry, op.cit., p. 15.

[41]Ernest G. Osborne, "The Individualization of Large Group Camping," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York City, 1936).